

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 244334

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

FOL RPT RABAT 5598 ACTION SECSTATE INFO ALGIERS NOUAKCHOTT
10 OCT 77 QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 5598

STADIS
EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: SP AG SS
SUBJECT: HEARINGS ON SPANISH SAHARA

REF STATE 242477

1. IN RESPONDING TO ANY QUERIES ALONG LINE OF THOSE IN PARA
7 REFTEL, DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO DRAW ON FOLLOWING.

2. RE PARA 7A, THIS ISSUE IS IN DISPUTE BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES.
IN KEEPING WITH OUR NEUTRALITY, WE HAVE AVOIDED TAKING POSITIONS
ON ALL THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES IN THE DISPUTE. OUR AIM IS TO
AVOID ANY ACTION WHICH WOULD EXACERBATE CURRENT TENSIONS IN
THE AREA. OUR HOPE IS THAT THE PARTIES CONCERNED WILL REACH
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A SETTLEMENT WITHOUT SUPER-POWER INVOLVEMENT.

3. THE USG HAS AVOIDED TAKING A POSTION ON SAHARAN SELF-
DETERMINATION ALSO BECAUSE OF SEVERAL UNIQUE AND HIGHLY CONFUSING
ELEMENTS. THE GOM CLAIMS, OF COURSE, THAT CONSULTATION OF THE
POPULATION HAS ALREADY OCCURRED AS A RESULT OF THE FEBRUARY 1976
VOTE OF THE JAMAA (SPANISH-CREATED TERRITORIAL ASSEMBLY OF

NOTABLES), AS WELL AS LOCAL ELECTIONS IN NOVEMBER 1976 AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN JUNE 1977 IN WHICH SAHARANS STILL RESIDENT IN THE TERRITORY TOOK PART. IN ADDITION, KING HASSAN HAS STATED PUBLICLY THAT HE IS WILLING TO CONDUCT A FURTHER CONSULTATION ON CONDITION THAT CALM BE RESTORED IN THE SAHARA THROUGH CESSATION OF ALGERIAN-SUPPORTED GUERRILLA WARFARE AND THAT SPAIN PROVIDE DETAILS OF 1974 CENSUS OF SAHARAN POPULATION AS BASIS FOR THE CONSULTATION.

4. PERHAPS AS MUCH AS HALF OF THE SAHARAN POPULATION, HOWEVER, IS LOCATED IN TINDOUF AREA IN REFUGEE CAMPS. THE REASON FOR THEIR PRESENCE THERE IS STRONGLY CONTESTED, WITH ONE SIDE CLAIMING THEY WERE FORCED TO GO THERE AND ARE BEING HELD AGAINST THEIR WILL, AND THE OTHER SIDE MAINTAINING THEY FLED FROM THE MOROCCAN ARMY. WHATEVER THE CASE, THEY HAVE BECOME HIGHLY POLITICIZED DURING THEIR MISERABLE TWO-YEAR EXISTENCE IN THE CAMPS. A FURTHER CONFUSING FACTOR IS THAT THERE ARE ALMOST CERTAINLY OTHER, NON-SAHARAN REFUGEES IN THE CAMPS. BOTH SIDES HAVE WAGED EXTENSIVE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGNS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE REFUGEES, BUT IT IS PERHAPS NOTEWORTHY THAT TO DATE THE ALGERIANS HAVE NOT PERMITTED UNHCR REPRESENTATIVES TO RESIDE IN TINDOUF AREA OR TO CONDUCT A CENSUS AND CATEGORIZE THE REFUGEES, AN ESSENTIAL PRECONDITION TO ANY SUBSEQUENT CONSULTATION.

5. WHILE WE ARE NOT FULLY CONVERSANT WITH THE DETAILS OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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EAST TIMOR PROBLEM, ONE ELEMENT WHICH SETS THE TWO SITUATIONS APART IS THAT MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA, AS A RESULT OF THE MADRID ACCORD AND UNGA'S SUBSEQUENT NOTING OF IT, HAVE A LEGAL BASIS FOR THEIR ADMINISTRATIVE PRESENCE IN THE TERRITORY. THE US HAS TO DATE WITHHELD JUDGMENT ON THIS OR OTHER JURIDICAL ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM IN THE HOPE THAT THE CONTENDING PARTIES, WITH WHICH WE HAVE IMPORTANT RELATIONS, CAN SETTLE THE MATTER IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT. THIS CONTINUES TO BE THE POSITION WHICH THE USSR, MOST OF THE ARABS, AND VIRTUALLY ALL OF WESTERN EUROPE HAVE ADOPTED TO DATE.

6. RE PARA 7B, WE WOULD CONSIDER USE OF US-SUPPLIED EQUIPMENT IN THE SAHARA OR MAURITANIA AS HAVING BEEN OF LIMITED EXTENT. THE SAHARA CONFLICT IS A LOW-LEVEL GUERRILLA WAR, AND THE MAJOR ITEMS OF US-ORIGIN MATERIAL IN THE MOROCCAN INVENTORY ARE NOT WELL SUITED FOR HIT-AND-RUN SKIRMISHES IN THE DESERT. (FYI - F-5 FIGHTERS ARE BEING USED IN THE SAHARA, BUT WE UNDERSTAND THIS WEAPONS SYSTEM HAS BEEN FOUND INEFFECTIVE IN ANTI-GUERRILLA OPERATIONS AGAINST THE POLISARIO AND CURRENT MISSION IS SOLELY RECONNAISSANCE.) THE MAJOR ITEMS OF US EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED UNDER THE MOROCCAN ARMY MODERNIZATION PROGRAM (M-48 TANKS AND M-113 APC'S), AS

WELL AS 16 US-ORIGIN 155MM SELF-PROPELLED HOWITZERS
TRANSFERRED LAST YEAR FROM IRAN, ARE KNOWN TO BE LOCATED
WITHIN MOROCCO PROPER, NOT THE SAHARA.

7. INASMUCH AS GUERRILLA ATTACKS EXTEND TO BOTH MAURITANIA
AND SOUTHERN MOROCCO, AS WELL AS THE SAHARA, IT
APPEARS LEGITIMATE TO VIEW MOROCCAN AND MAURITANIAN ANTI-
GUERRILLA OPERATIONS AS SELF-DEFENSE. THERE IS, OF COURSE, A
FORMAL DEFENSE AGREEMENT BETWEEN MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA. THE
MOROCCAN ARMED FORCES HAVE NOT RESORTED TO HOT PURSUIT OF
GUERRILLAS RETURNING TO ALGERIA AFTER MILITARY OPERATIONS IN
MOROCCO AND THE SAHARA, AND IN CONDUCTING MILITARY SWEEPS HAVE
MOVED FROM EAST TO WEST TO AVOID ANY SEMBLANCE OF THREAT TO
ALGERIA.

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8. RE PARA 7C, WE BELIEVE THIS ALLEGATION IS SIMPLY UNTRUE.
WHILE WE ARE UNAWARE OF THE NATURE OF BEHIND-THE-SCENES
MANEUVERING AT THE TIME IN NEW YORK, IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT
THE USG SUPPORTED SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION FULLY.

9. DEAN OF LAW FACULTY OF MUHAMMAD V UNIVERSITY IN RABAT,
MOHAMED BENNOUNA, LEFT SUDDENLY FOR THE US ON OCTOBER 9,
POSSIBLY TO TAKE PART IN THE HEARINGS.
ANDERSON

UNQUOTE VANCE

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NNN

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